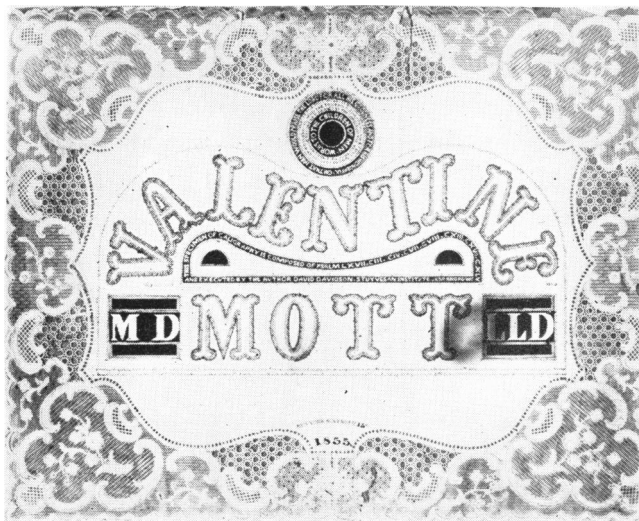


VALENTINE MOTT, 1785-1865
THE ACADEMY'S THIRD PRESIDENT



ON NOVEMBER 27, 1865, the members of The New York Academy of Medicine met in the large chapel of the University of the City of New York to hear an address by Dr. Alfred C. Post on "the Life and Character of the late distinguished Fellow and ex-President. . . . Valentine Mott." "A large and appreciating audience of ladies and gentlemen were present." Thus did the Academy honor its illustrious third president who had died six months before, on April 26. No other Fellow of the Academy had won such world-wide acclaim as this great surgeon.

Valentine Mott was born on August 20, 1785, in Glen Cove, Long Island, the son of a physician, Henry Mott. At the age of nineteen he entered the office of his relative, Valentine Seaman, one of the leading New York physicians of the time. Mott received his M.D. degree from

the Medical Department of Columbia in 1806, and in the following year was off to Edinburgh and London for further study. He had been a pupil of the New York surgeon, Wright Post. In London he studied under another great surgeon, Sir Astley Paston Cooper. On his return to New York he taught surgery and embarked upon an extraordinary career as a bold, skilful and pioneer surgeon. He won acclaim throughout the world for the operations he originated. Cooper said of him that he performed more major operations than any surgeon in history up to his time. In the *Academy Bulletin*, 1925, vol. 1, pp. 209-214, F. H. Garrison provides a biographical sketch of Mott which contains, on p. 210, a list of some of these operations. Another biographer claims that he performed about one thousand amputations, 150 operations for stone in the bladder and ligated 40 large arteries. He was the first to tie the innominate artery for subclavian aneurism and to excise the lower jaw for necrosis. He was one of the first to achieve a successful amputation of the hip joint.

Mott was an obvious choice for Academy President. His was one of the three names signed to the public notice, requesting regular practitioners to meet to establish an "Academy of Medicine and Surgery", in December of 1846. His was the first scientific paper, delivered at the meeting of March 3, 1847, on the treatment of ununited fractures. The development of the Academy was of paramount importance to him, and he urged in his valedictory address, February 6, 1850, that the meetings be devoted more to scientific subjects, for he felt that the Academy in its three years of life had not advanced medical science as anticipated. Mott served a second term as President when he was elected in 1857 at the age of seventy-two.

His concern for the Academy is shown in the following exhortation, culled from his valedictory address of 1850:

"Consider, brethren, how dispiriting it is, to sit out a meeting with only thirty or forty members, scattered about the benches in this spacious Hall; how little inducement is there to come again — to *work* for so small an assembly. Think for a moment on the INFLUENCE of these things, and for the Academy's sake — for the sake of *Legitimate Medicine*, assailed by Quackery on every side — for your own sakes — for *mine*, if you will, COME to the meetings of the Academy. Do not, on this pretence, or the other—above all, do not from indolence, abstain

from them. Come, meet, meet, brethren, numerously; and you will make the Academy all that you desire to see it. Let us, on each stated occasion, be enabled to say with the Apostle, 'we are all here,' and all will be well.

"There is nothing that will contribute more to the advancement of the interests of the Academy — nothing that will more conduce to its stability — than punctuality of attendance on the part of all. And when we do meet, let us not talk, *but act*."

GERTRUDE L. ANNAN

Librarian,

The New York Academy of Medicine

A note regarding the illustration—The Academy Library has two valentines made in honor of Valentine Mott by an "artist in penmanship" of Stuyvesant Institute, David Davidson. One, executed in very fine calligraphy, is dated the Ides of February, 1833, and contains the Book of Job. The valentine shown here contains in the tiny script Psalms 67, 103, 104, 107, 108, 113, 117 and 145. The date is November 15, 1855.